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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. ARMS SALES TO TAIWAN

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused February 4 news coverage on the possible change in control of a local department store; on the legal cases involving former President Chen Shui-bian and his family; and on the year-end five city and county magistrates' elections. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and the possible sanctions Beijing will impose on U.S. companies selling weapons to Taiwan. The article said the sanctions will damage China first before they harm the United States. A column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" also said Beijing is facing a dilemma in the wake of Washington's announcement of arms sales to Taiwan. End summary.

A) "How Is Beijing Going to Punish the United States?"

Columnist Antonio Chiang wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 530,000] (2/4):

"Beijing reacted unyieldingly against the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, pledging to impose sanctions on relevant U.S. companies. Beijing also warned that international cooperation between China and the United States would be affected as well. Such open challenging is more of an emotional nature ..., and its consequences will damage China first before they harm the United States. The U.S. companies that will be punished by Beijing for selling weapons to Taiwan include the Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation, Lockheed Martin Corporation, and the Boeing Company. ... These companies are all important members of 'China's lobbying group,' and it will be interesting to learn how Beijing is going to impose sanctions on them. ...

"China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it will suspend military exchanges between the two countries, postpone the deputy ministerial-level consultations on strategic security, arms control and non-proliferation issues, call off the visit by the U.S. secretary of defense, and cancel the meeting between China's chief of the general staff and the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. In reality, such exchanges are more of symbolic significance than substantive importance -- it is hardly worth it to have them but not bad enough to discard them. Having these programs either canceled or postponed will only make Washington breathe a sigh of relief.

"When it comes to international issues, Washington badly needs Beijing's assistance, particularly on Iran and Pyongyang's nuclear issue. The chances are slim though for China to abandon cooperation with the United States and return to its old ways of boycott. On the Iranian issue, the move will surely make Europe feel repugnant. As for North Korea's nuclear problem, which is of vital importance to China, if Beijing holds a passive attitude, it will lose its leading role on the matter.

"It is due to the United States that China is able to see its international position rise dramatically in the past few years. Beijing teaming up with Washington does more good for China than for the United States. If Beijing decides to adopt a passive manner and

boycott, it will create a lot of difficulties for Washington, but it will also put China's international position, international image and its influence in an unfavorable position. Which side will lose more if Hu Jintao has to change his [planned] visit to the United States? It is foreseeable that China's sanctions on the United States will be much talk but little action. ..."

B) "How Is Beijing Going to Give Equal Consideration to the Two Aspects?"

Journalist Wang Ming-yi wrote in the "Observation from Beijing" column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (2/4):

"During the process of China's peaceful rise, there are two 'general aspects' that have always been the 'unbearable heaviness of being' in the minds of the leaders in Beijing: One aspect is the strategic cooperation between the United States and China, and the other is the peaceful development of cross-Straits [relations]. The problem is that these two aspects often stand on opposite sides to each other. The U.S. arms sales to Taiwan that has again got on the diplomatic nerves between Washington and Beijing lately have put Beijing in a dilemma. ... But given the rise of China's national strength in general and its increasing confidence in decision-making, Beijing will nonetheless exercise restraint in its measures to protest against [the sales] and impose sanctions on U.S. companies manufacturing weapons systems. Even if [U.S. President] Obama's scheduled meeting with the Dalai Lama in late February will likely trigger another round of protests, it is certain that Washington and Beijing, in consideration of the overall situation, will try to keep their relationship in a state of 'fighting but not breaking up.' ...

"Previous experience with the interactions between Washington, Beijing and Taipei shows that arms sales have always been a complicated and difficult matter. Beijing should have learned by now that not only the Republican Party, but also the Democratic Party, will sell fighter jets to Taiwan. By the same token, not just Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian have purchased weapons and missiles, but it will be unlikely for Ma Ying-jeou to give up arms procurements. [At the end of the day,] it all comes down to the lessons Beijing's leaders will learn from the complicated interactions in international politics."

STANTON